

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 7434

EXDIS

FOR ASST. SECRETARY TODMAY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PINS OLAB EC
SUBJ: PLAN TO MAKE DEMARCHE ON AZTRA INCIDENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS
SITUATION IN ECUADOR

1. I PLAN TO REQUEST SEPARATE APPOINTMENTS WITH ADMIRAL POVEDA AND GENERAL DURAN DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO RAISE THE AZTRA INCIDENT AND ASSOCIATED HUMAN RIGHTS:RETORNO QUESTIONS. MY CONCERN IS MOTIVATED NOT ONLY BY THE REGRETTABLE HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECT OF AZTRA AND THE SUBSEQUENT INCARCERATION OF LABOR LEADERS, BUT THE EFFECTS OF THESE INCIDENTS ON THE "RETORNO" PROCESS.

2. I PROPOSE TO TELL DURAN AND POVEDA THAT MY CALL IS MOTIVATED BY PERSONAL CONCERN AND NOT ON INSTRUCTIONS OF MY GOVERNMENT. I FEEL THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO PROCEED SINCE THE FINAL JUDGMENT ON THE AZTRA INCIDENT IS NOT IN YET, AND A CALL ON INSTRUCTIONS WOULD FORMALLY INDICATE A PREMATURE USG JUDGMENT OF GOE COMPLICITY IN THE INCIDENT.

3. I WILL TELL DURAN AND POVEDA THAT I BELIEVE THE AZTRA INCIDENT WAS REGRETTABLE, AND THAT ALTHOUGH I AM NOT JUDGING THE FACTS, THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US POINTS
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TO POLICE NEGLIGENCE AND OVERRREACTION. I WILL TELL THEM THAT THIS FACT WILL LEAD PUBLIC OPINION ABROAD TO BELIEVE THE WORST. I WILL SUGGEST THAT AN OPEN, UNBIASED INVESTIGATION WOULD BE THE BEST WAY TO FORESTALL THIS REACTION.

4. I WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CONVERSATION AT THIS POINT TO BROADEN THE DISCUSSION TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE BROADER

QUESTION OF GOE LABOR POLICY. I WILL POINT OUT TO DURAN AND POVEDA THAT ANY NEGATIVE REACTION FROM A COVERUP OF THE AZTRA INCIDENT WILL TEND TO CONFIRM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN EMERGING PATTERN OF REPRESSION OF ORGANIZED LABOR AND EVEN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. I WILL EMPHASIZE OUR CONCERN OVER THE JAILING OF CEOSL LABOR LEADERS WHO ARE APPARENTLY NOT GUILTY OF ANY CRIME AND WHO, MOREOVER, ARE NOT COMMUNISTS.

5. I WILL EXPRESS TO DURAN AND POVEDA MY PERSONAL FEAR THAT THE GOE IS DIVERGING FROM THE GOOD RECORD IT HAS COMPILED TO DATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH, ALONG WITH THE RETORNO, HAS BEEN LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VERY CORDIAL STATE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. I WILL MAKE THE POINT WHICH FLOWS FROM THAT, THAT HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OR, EVEN WORSE, ANY SERIOUS ROADBLOCKS IN THE RETORNO PROCESS, WOULD NECESSARILY AFFECT THOSE RELATIONS. I WOULD HOPE TO DISGUISE THAT IMPLIED THREAT IN A VELVET GLOVE, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE.

6. I BELIEVE THE ABOVE DEMARCHE WILL BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY AT THE MOMENT FOR THE USG TO BROACH ITS CONCERN ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR PROBLEM UNDERSCORED BY THE AZTRA INCIDENT. I WOULD LIKE TO ALLOW A LITTLE TIME, PERHAPS A WEEK, TO SEE IF THE DEMARCHE HAS ITS INTENDED EFFECT. IF NOT, I WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION.

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7. I AM CONVINCED THAT WE MUST ACT VERY CAREFULLY IN THIS MATTER. THE RETORNO PROCESS HAS BEEN FRAGILE SINCE ITS INCEPTION, WITH ANY NUMBER OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN DERAILING IT. THE AZTRA INCIDENT COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN THIS SCENARIO. OUR MAIN FOCUS MUST REMAIN, IN THIS AS IN OTHER ISOLATED INCIDENTS, ON THE RETORNO. IF IT DOES NOT OCCUR, WE CAN EXPECT A DETERIORATION IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ECUADOR AS WELL AS A BLOW TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT HERE. SUBSEQUENT TO THIS DEMARCHE, ANY FUTURE USG ACTION ON THIS ISSUE SHOULD BE DONE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO STRENGTHEN THE "RETORNO" PROCESS.
BLOOMFIELD

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